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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 SINGAPORE 000227

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DEPARTMENT FOR EAP/MTS - M. COPPOLA  
NEW DELHI FOR J. EHRENDREICH

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/13/2019  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [SN](#)  
SUBJECT: SINGAPORE MAKES PUBLIC ITS RELEASE OF TWO JI  
MEMBERS

REF: A. 08 SINGAPORE 104  
[B](#). 07 SINGAPORE 1145  
[C](#). 05 SINGAPORE 3146

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Daniel Shields for reason 1.4(d)

Summary  
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[1](#)1. (S/NF) Summary: Singapore released two Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) members from custody on January 5, Singapore's Internal Security Department (ISD) informed Embassy officials on March [1](#)1. The Ministry of Home Affairs issued a press release about the freed JI members on the evening of March 12 and the Straits Times published muted coverage of the story on March [1](#)3. Singapore authorities had arrested the two men in January 2002 for planning attacks on targets in Singapore, including U.S. facilities. The GOS deemed them rehabilitated and releasable subject to continued monitoring. Post expressed concern to the GOS over the fact that the detainees were released on January 5 but the GOS did not inform the USG until March 11. Although Singapore touts its Religious Rehabilitation Group (RRG) as a zero-recidivism success, it has re-detained at least one suspected terrorist whom it had declared "rehabilitated." End summary.

Singapore Released Two JI Plotters in January 2009  
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[1](#)2. (C) Singapore released two Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) members from detention under the Internal Security Act (ISA) on January 5, the Internal Security Department (ISD) told Embassy officials on March 11. The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) disseminated the same information in a press release on the evening of March 12. (The ISD initially told Embassy personnel that the releases took place on January 6, but the subsequent MHA press release gives the date of release as January 5.) Post expressed concern to the GOS over the fact that the detainees were released on January 5 but the GOS did not inform the USG until March 11. The released detainees are Mohamed Ellias a/k/a Mohamed Khan and Ja'afar bin Mistooki, whom Singapore authorities arrested in January 2002 for planning JI terrorist attacks on targets in Singapore, including U.S. facilities. Press accounts indicate that both received training at al-Qaeda camps in Afghanistan; both carried out active surveillance of potential American and other targets; and Ellias attempted to procure a large quantity of ammonium nitrate, potentially usable for truck bombs, in collaboration with an al-Qaeda operative and a Moro Islamic Liberation Front bombmaker. The GOS arrested Ellias and Ja'afar under the preventive detention provisions of the ISA and never prosecuted them for any specific crime.

GOS Deems JI Members Rehabilitated but Will Monitor Them  
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13. (C) The Ministry of Home Affairs announced that Ellias and Ja'afar "have been cooperative in investigations," have "shown significant progress in their rehabilitation," and "were assessed to no longer pose a security threat that required preventive detention." Their releases are subject to certain conditions, known as a "Suspension Direction"; if they violate the conditions, they may be immediately re-detained. Ellias and Ja'afar may not leave Singapore, and they must report regularly to the ISD. The ISD will also monitor their telephone and Internet activity until the Suspension Direction expires. With these releases, Singapore now holds 20 suspected terrorists in preventive detention under the ISA, with 42 ex-detainees free on Restriction Orders that limit their movements. (Note: The figure of 20 preventive detentions includes JI member Mas Selamat Kastari, who is, of course, a detainee in name only, having escaped from ISD custody and vanished over a year ago.) Ellias and Ja'afar are apparently the only ex-detainees currently subject to Suspension Directions.

Singapore Considers Its Rehabilitation Program a Success...

14. (U) Ellias and Ja'afar are not the first detainees to be deemed rehabilitated and released. Singapore's Religious Rehabilitation Group (RRG), a re-education effort by volunteer Muslim clerics, has operated under ISD auspices since shortly after the first wave of Singapore JI arrests in December 2001, and the GOS has released rehabilitated detainees at irregular intervals. (See reftels A and B for reports of previously released groups; see reftel C for a

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description of RRG practicesQ At a Singapore-hosted International Conference on Terrorist Rehabilitation in February, ISD officer Ustaz Mohamed Feisal Mohamed Hassan said that the ISD has released a total of approximately 40 detainees, or two-thirds of those arrested as suspected terrorists, after RRG rehabilitation. A release occurs only if RRG clerics, psychologists, police case-officers, and prison wardens agree that the subject no longer poses a threat, the ISD writes a brief recommending release, and the Minister of Home Affairs and the rest of the Cabinet approve.

Speaking at the same conference, Singapore's Minister for Law and Second Minister for Home Affairs K. Shanmugam claimed that Singapore's RRG has achieved a recidivism rate of zero so far.

...But Has Re-detained One "Rehabilitated" Subject

15. (S/NF) LEGATT's GOS contacts informed him that the ISD re-detained one "rehabilitated" subject under the ISA last year. According to LEGATT's sources, the ISD determined that the subject attempted to resume his JI associations. The re-detained subject remains in preventive ISA detention. The GOS does not publicly acknowledge having re-arrested a released detainee.

Press Coverage of Releases Uncharacteristically Muted

16. (SBU) In the past, the GOS has carefully choreographed coverage of JI releases or new detentions in the government-linked local press. The coverage typically highlights quotations of prominent Muslim religious scholars and politicians condemning the detainees' former radical views and praising their successful rehabilitation and release. (Reftel A and B.) By contrast, the releases of Ellias and Ja'afar received a relatively short article on page C3 of the Straits Times newspaper, opposite a page filled with the sometimes lurid details of unrelated criminal cases. The article closely tracked the MHA press release, adding only a few details to flesh out the men's former involvement in terrorism, and it contained none of the usual

commentary by Muslim leaders. The only quotation included was Minister Shanmugan's claim of a zero recidivism rate for Singapore's RRG. An article in Singapore's Malay-language daily, Berita Harian, was nearly identical to the Straits Times article.

#### Restrictions on al-Qaeda Associate Expire

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17. (U) Simultaneously with the latest JI releases, the GOS announced the expiration of a Restriction Order on Faisel bin Abdullah, whom it had detained under the ISA in February 2003 for providing material support to an al-Qaeda collaborator. The GOS deemed Faisel rehabilitated and released him in October 2003, subject to a Suspension Direction. When the Suspension Direction lapsed in February 2005, the GOS replaced it with Restriction Orders (RO) limiting his movements. The last RO expired in February 2009. MHA's March 12 press release states, "As Faisel had been cooperative in investigations and responded to rehabilitation, he was assessed to no longer require supervision under an RO regime."

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